

# Adolescent Suicide

## INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT ADOLESCENTS

### Why does it matter?

- Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death for all Americans and the third leading cause of death for young people aged 15-24 years old in the nation.
- Males are four times more likely to die of suicide than are females.
- Females are more likely to attempt suicide than males.
- In general, suicide rates are higher than the national average in the western mountain states and lower in the eastern and Midwestern states.

Source: *The Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent Suicide, 1999*

### Who is affected?

- Suicide can affect anyone, it does not discriminate between socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity or sex.
- The number one cause of suicide is untreated depression.
- Of the many millions of Americans who suffer from depression in any given year, **80% can be effectively treated, but only 30% seek help** and of that number, slightly more than half are accurately diagnosed and receive appropriate treatment.
- Depression is a total body illness that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, behavior, physical health and appearance.
- Ninety percent of adolescent suicide victims have at least one diagnosable, active psychiatric illness at the time of death-- most often depression, and substance abuse. (CDC, National Center for Health Statistics 1998)

Source: Suicide Awareness - Voices of Education

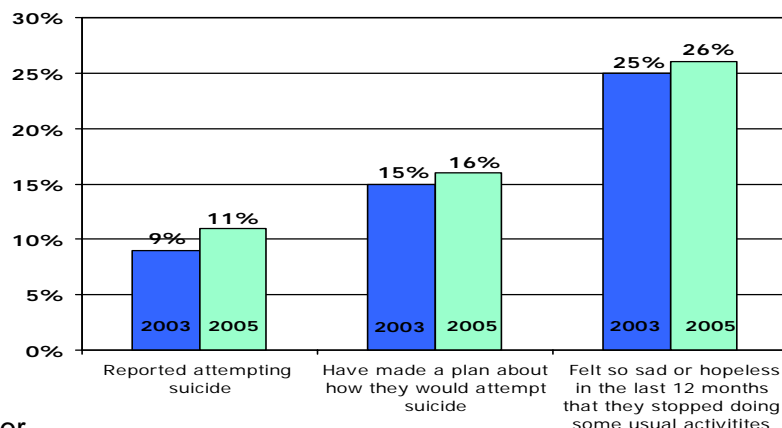
### In South Dakota...

### Did You Know?

† The Healthy People 2010 objective 18-2 is to reduce the rate of suicide attempts by adolescents to a 12-month average of 1 percent.

- According to the 2005 SD Youth Risk Behavior Survey 11% of respondents reported actually attempting suicide.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth age 15-24 in South Dakota. (SD Department of Health)
- Suicide accounts for approximately 24 deaths per year for youth and young adults aged 15-24. (SD Department of Health)

### Behaviors of SD Children that Result in Intentional and Unintentional Injuries



Source: 2003 & 2005 SD Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report

- Firearms were the most common method of suicide among South Dakota resident youth age 15-24 during 2001-2005. (SD Department of Health)
- In 2003, South Dakota ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation for suicides for all ages, with a rate of 13.4. (American Association of Suicidology)

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## What are the warning signs?

- ☞ Talks about committing suicide
- ☞ Has trouble eating or sleeping
- ☞ Experiences drastic changes in behavior
- ☞ Withdraws from friends and/or social activities
- ☞ Loses interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- ☞ Prepares for death by making out a will and final arrangements
- ☞ Gives away prized possessions
- ☞ Has attempted suicide before
- ☞ Takes unnecessary risks
- ☞ Has had recent severe losses
- ☞ Is preoccupied with death and dying
- ☞ Loses interest in their personal appearance
- ☞ Increases their use of alcohol or drugs

Source: American Association of Suicidology

## Who should you contact for help?

- ☎ A community mental health agency  
<http://stage.state.sd.us/dhs/DMH/cmhcclist.htm>
- ☎ A private therapist or counselor
- ☎ A school counselor or psychologist
- ☎ A family physician
- ☎ A suicide prevention or crisis center

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

### For Information in South Dakota:

South Dakota Department of Health  
615 East 4th Street  
Pierre, SD 57501-1700  
Phone: 1-800-738-2301 Fax: 605-773-5509  
<http://www.state.sd.us/doh/famhlth/datasheets.htm>

## What can you do for someone who is threatening suicide?

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that other options are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Source: American Association of Suicidology

## Need more information?

- American Association of Suicidology  
([www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org))
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
([www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org))
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))
- National Strategy for Suicide Prevention  
([www.mentalhealth.org/suicideprevention/organizations.htm](http://www.mentalhealth.org/suicideprevention/organizations.htm))
- South Dakota Suicide Prevention  
([www.sdsuicideprevention.org](http://www.sdsuicideprevention.org))
- Suicide Awareness - Voices of Education  
([www.save.org](http://www.save.org))
- Suicide Information and Education Centre  
([www.suicideinfo.ca/](http://www.suicideinfo.ca/))
- Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network  
([www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org))